



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Centre Dramatique Nationall Orleans-Loiret-Centre Edinburgh International Festival, at Edinburgh Festival Theatre

Title of Event: Le Soulier de Satin

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 16 August 2004

Overall Rating (Please rate the production overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. the particular strengths and weaknesses.)

Good

Visually stunning, and extremely well performed, this was a bit of an endurance test. Having “done it “ one would not want to do it again.

Name: David Taylor

Date: _30 August /08 /2004_

Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please tick the relevant title

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named below. It has been prepared by either a specialist Advisor, or an officer of the Scottish Arts Council, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work and to the management of the venue, if the venue is core funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

The report may be made available to Scottish Arts Council Officers, Council and Committee members, and specialist advisors as appropriate. It will be taken into account in assessing the work of the producing company in relation to applications for funding to the Scottish Arts Council. It may also be used by the Council to report on the overall performance of its Core Funded organisations.

Evaluators should enter their rating under each section, explaining briefly their reason for the rating with reference to their comments under each section. Ratings should be given in accordance with the following:

Very Poor – standard falls well below what is acceptable.

Poor – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.

Competent – routine rather than especially interesting.

Good – well conceived and executed

Excellent – conceived and executed to a high standard.

1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event, taking account of the following:

1.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
1.1	Vision and imagination	Good	The choice of programming this production was certainly brave given the length of the piece ~(11hrs) and dense nature of the content. One can say that an international festival is the place, perhaps the only place, where such an ambitious presentation would seem appropriate. To aim for the extra ordinary is surely one of the functions of such a festival.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	The piece was performed in French with English subtitles. This worked as far as comprehension is concerned but I was conscious of losing much of the colour and poeticism of the text due to the necessity of abbreviation. Given that the play is so text-heavy a bare literal translation meant that one lacked the texture and richness that would have made the production more engaging.

2. Strengths and Weaknesses

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with reference to the following:

2.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
2.1	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions	Good	As noted above the script was long with scenes of considerable length with rhetorical dialogues. This did put some strain on concentration. While some of the themes, relating to Catholic mysticism and self-sacrifice, felt abstruse and psychologically remote, the exploration of issues of empire, conquest and “otherness” resonated for a contemporary audience.
2.2	Direction	Excellent	The direction was monumental and assured, with some wonderful images. There was also a measure of variety introduced which helped to leaven what were often extremely long scenes.

2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Excellent	All of the performers were of the highest order. Skill and stamina were definitely the order of the day.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Excellent	Very strong live music performed by a small band that played by turns in the pit and on stage.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	N/A	
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Excellent	The set design was ingenious and awe-inspiring at times. Costumes were bold and yet aesthetically economical. All of the set and costume elements were beautifully complemented by superb lighting. The images of the burnished breastplates reflecting the sunlight will stay with me for a while. Similarly the golden shimmer of Eldorado is imprinted in the imagination.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Excellent	The production was presented well, with visible on-stage technicians moving the large stage pieces well.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Good	This is hard to judge. Undoubtedly a few people left at various stages in the proceedings. Although pretty exhausted by the end the audience responded warmly at the curtain call.

3. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and the venue, with reference to the checklist below, including additional comments/observations.

3.	Criteria	Comments
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¹ In particular, please comment on the quality and appropriateness of any original music composed for the production. Please indicate whether the music was performed live or recorded, in whole or in parts, and what effect this has on the quality of the production.

² Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule

3.1	Suitability of the venue for the event	Good- however there was not enough information readily available about the timing of the event. One would have expected prominent notices giving guidance on this.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Good informative programme, although the typeface is rather faint and difficult to read in artificial light.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	The publicity was up to the EIF's usual high standard.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	N/A- I did not book the tickets
3.5	External signage and signposting	N/A
3.6	Internal directional signage	Good
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Good
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Clearly a marathon of an event. It would be hard to say whether reducing the length-which could have been easily done by cutting some non-essential scenes- would have detracted from the overall experience. Part of the thing was the length and some members of the audience took a perverse pride in endurance.
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Good
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	Well acknowledged in all print.

³ These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

⁴ Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the range, content, and when and where available. Be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised, commenting on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information

⁵ The following is an extract from the Scottish Arts Council's conditions of grant for funded organisations:

"The company should acknowledge Scottish Arts Council funding in press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising). Acknowledgement of the Scottish Arts Council grant must also be made in any secondary or indirect products arising from the revenue funding such as recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc."

Please comment on whether these conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.

